

Perspective of hope; sermon 8.9.2024

1. THE REALITY

Every day brings enough worries and reasons to experience fears and distress about how it will all turn out. But if you experience worry and distress - about events, about relationships, about things going wrong, about yourself, then that too is a feeling that is understandable and natural and somehow part of life. But it is hard to bear without hope.

Romans 8:22 For we are conscious that all living things are weeping and sorrowing in pain together till now. 23 And not only so, but we who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we have sorrow in our minds, waiting for the time when we will take our place as sons, that is, the salvation of our bodies.

Notice that Paul actually connects our groaning with hope - because, in fact, groaning reminds us that there must be another reality that we long for, a future that is in some sense better and makes sense of our present suffering. We just can't see it yet.

2. LORD, OPEN HIS EYES.

One of my favorite stories from the Old Testament:

The city of Dothan witnessed a strange event when the prophet Elisha took refuge there to hide from the king of Aram who was fighting against Israel. He sent an army to the city to surround it and take Elisha captive.

5 Kings 6:15-17 Now the servant of the man of God, having got up early and gone out, saw an army with horses and carriages of war all round the town. And the servant said to him, O my master, what are we to do? And he said in answer, Have no fear; those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Then Elisha made a prayer to the Lord, saying, Lord, let his eyes be open so that he may see. And the Lord made the young man's eyes open; and he saw that all the mountain was full of horses and carriages of fire round Elisha.

The servant simply sees reality as it is. He sees the armies that have surrounded the city. The situation is desperate and capture is inevitable. But the problem is not what Elisha's servant sees, but what he doesn't see. Elisha has forgotten the hope he can have through faith in God who delivers us. The harsh reality came between him and God, created an obstacle, obscured the perspective, so that he forgot to reckon with God. Trusting that in any situation, God is not going to let things get out of control, no matter what. Elisha perceives this reality: *those who are with us are more than those who are with them.* and this is the reason why he prays: *Lord, let his eyes be open so that he may see.* They see that there is a mountain full of fiery horses and chariots all around - that is, that God is still on His throne and has power over every second and atom of our lives.

Our problem when we fall into despair is not what we see. Yes, all of our struggles are real, real. But our problem is not what we see around us, it's what we don't see. We lose the perspective of people who believe in a God who sits on His throne.

The funny thing is that in the end, not a single shot is fired in that battle. Elisha also prays for the enemy armies that God will blind them. Finally, he goes out to the confused soldiers, tells them that the city they have come to is not Dothan and that there is no Elisha in it, and takes them directly to the capital of their arch-enemy, the King of Israel. He gives them a sumptuous feast and the king of Aram, taken aback by the reception, never dares to attack Israel again.

Such a scenario would never have occurred to Elisha's servant. Where there is real hope, there is also room for unexpected, divine resolutions. Elisha's hope lies precisely in the fact that he counted on God and His

(not his) denouement. He read everything he saw around him through the lens that His God is salvation, even when He is not seen.

3. HOW THE HOPE THAT CANNOT BE SEEN WORKS

Romans 8:24 For our salvation is by hope: but hope which is seen is not hope: for who is hoping for what he sees?

Can our hope that we are saved in Christ have a practical impact on our daily lives - on what I experience today, tomorrow, next week? Or is it only a hope for the distant future? For "eternal life"?

Therefore, in order to use this hope in our daily lives, we need to "open our eyes" (a wider perspective) much more and begin to use it not only in relation to God, but in relation to everything.

We understand quite well that Jesus Christ gave us hope by mediating our reconciliation with God, but He does not want to mediate only between us and God, but also between us and other people, He wants to stand between us and the circumstances we are in, between us and the things we own, even between us and ourselves. He wants to change the perspective of our whole life! To transform all the despair we experience in relation to other people, friends and enemies, a new school year, personal challenges, things, gains and losses,...).

But we must not do what Elisha did, who "let go" of the hope he has in God from the situation he found himself in. He has cut reality short of its spiritual dimension. Nowhere in what he was experiencing did he see God, Christ, or salvation, and therefore no hope. If you want to live with a perspective of hope, you cannot leave out Christ. Therefore, avoid two things:

First, avoid looking for your hope without Jesus. Directly, without his intervention. Whether you are dealing with everyday issues or big issues, relationships or things, approach them through Christ. Like putting on His glasses, see through His eyes. You will gain a different perspective.

Second, avoid letting anything come between you and Christ. Worrying about things, pursuing my own dreams, planning for the future, self-actualization, feeling that my life is valued by others. All of this can become a hopelessly heavy burden without the mediation of Christ. If you deal with all of these things first and Christ is just waiting in line for you to sort out your own life, you don't have much hope. But if you make Him the mediator between you and all that, your perspective will change completely.

4. WE ARE PATIENTLY WAITING

Romans 8:25 But if we have hope for that which we see not, then we will be able to go on waiting for it.

I don't see Christ, but I hope in him. Christ is our mountain full of horses and chariots of fire, he is at hand. He is our salvation and our hope. The mediator between us and everything else. A change of perspective. An unexpected denouement. Trust Him, patiently, in all things, seek Him daily.

Amen